

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1           1.     A method for collating e-mail comprising:
  - 2           (a)     differencing at least one first e-mail message and a second e-mail
  - 3           message wherein said at least one first e-mail message is prior to said second e-mail
  - 4           message, said differencing generating a set of unmatched text and a set of matched
  - 5           text;
  - 6           (b)     matching said set of matched text against a collated message file, said
  - 7           matching step identifying a position in said collated message file at an end of a
  - 8           portion of said collated message file corresponding to said set of matched text; and
  - 9           (c)     inserting said set of unmatched text in said collated message file at
  - 10          said position.
- 1           2.     The method of claim 1 wherein said at least one first e-mail message
- 2           comprises a plurality of first e-mail messages, the method further comprising:
  - 3           (d)     repeating step (a) for each e-mail message of said plurality of first e-
  - 4           mail messages; and
  - 5           (e)     selecting one of said plurality of e-mail messages having a largest set
  - 6           of matched text, and wherein, in step (b), said largest set of matched lines is matched
  - 7           against said collated message file.
- 1           3.     The method of claim 2 further comprising selectably adding a user-
- 2           configurable identifier to said set of unmatched text inserted in step (c).
- 1           4.     The method of claim 1 wherein said at least one first e-mail message
- 2           and said second e-mail message comprise a set of topically-related e-mail selected in
- 3           response to a preselected pattern in a header portion of each e-mail of said set of
- 4           topically-related e-mail.
- 1           5.     The method of claim 4 further comprising:
  - 2           (d)     searching each e-mail message of said set of topically-related e-mail
  - 3           for at least one member of a preselected set of prepended identifiers;

4           (e)    if said at least one at least one member of a preselected set of  
5    prepended identifiers matches a portion of said message of said set of topically-  
6    related messages:

7                   (i)    selecting a portion of said message not having said prepended  
8    identifier;

9                   (ii)   inserting said portion from substep (i) into said collated  
10   message file at a position following a portion matching a set of text having said at  
11   least one member of a preselected set of prepended identifiers; and

12                  (iii)   bypassing steps (a)-(c).

1           6.    The method of claim 5 further comprising:

2                   (f)    extracting said set of text having said at least one member of a  
3    preselected set of prepended identifiers;

4                   (g)    stripping said at least one member of a preselected set of prepended  
5    identifiers from said set of text; and

6                   (h)    matching a set of text from step (g) against said collated message file,  
7    wherein said position in substep (e)(ii) comprises a position at an end of a portion of  
8    said collated message file matching a set of text from step (g).

1           7.    The method of claim 5 wherein said step of searching each e-mail  
2    message of said set of topically-related e-mail comprises searching each e-mail in  
3    chronological order of said set of topically-related e-mail.

1           8.     A computer program product in a tangible storage medium, the  
2 program product for collating e-mail comprising programming instructions for:

3           (a)     differencing at least one first e-mail message and a second e-mail  
4 message wherein said at least one first e-mail message is prior to said second e-mail  
5 message, said differencing generating a set of unmatched text and a set of matched  
6 text;

7           (b)     matching said set of matched text against a collated message file, said  
8 matching step identifying a position in said collated message file at an end of a  
9 portion of said collated message file corresponding to said set of matched text; and

10          (c)     inserting said set of unmatched text in said collated message file at  
11 said position.

1           9.     The program product of claim 8 wherein said at least one first e-mail  
2 message comprises a plurality of first e-mail messages, the program product further  
3 comprising programming instructions for:

4           (d)     repeating (a) for each e-mail message of said plurality of first e-mail  
5 messages; and

6           (e)     selecting one of said plurality of e-mail messages having a largest set  
7 of matched text, and wherein, in (b), said largest set of matched lines is matched  
8 against said collated message file.

1           10.    The program product of claim 8 further comprising programming  
2 instructions for selectably adding a user-configurable identifier to said set of  
3 unmatched text inserted in (c).

1           11.    The program product of claim 8 wherein said at least one first e-mail  
2 message and said second e-mail message comprise a set of topically-related e-mail  
3 selected in response to a preselected pattern in a header portion of each e-mail of said  
4 set of topically-related e-mail.

1           12.    The program product of claim 11 further comprising programming  
2 instructions for:

3 (d) searching each e-mail message of said set of topically-related e-mail  
4 for at least one member of a preselected set of prepended identifiers;

5 (e) if said at least one at least one member of a preselected set of  
6 prepended identifiers matches a portion of said message of said set of topically-  
7 related messages:

8 (i) selecting a portion of said message not having said prepended  
9 identifier;

10 (ii) inserting said portion from (i) into said collated message file at  
11 a position following a portion matching a set of text having said at least one member  
12 of a preselected set of prepended identifiers; and

13 (iii) bypassing (a)-(c).

1 13. The program product of claim 5 further comprising programming  
2 instructions for:

3 (f) extracting said set of text having said at least one member of a  
4 preselected set of prepended identifiers;

5 (g) stripping said at least one member of a preselected set of prepended  
6 identifiers from said set of text; and

7 (h) matching a set of text from (g) against said collated message file,  
8 wherein said position in (e)(ii) comprises a position at an end of a portion of said  
9 collated message file matching a set of text from (g).

1 14. The program product of claim 12 wherein said programming  
2 instructions for searching each e-mail message of said set of topically-related e-mail  
3 comprises programming instructions for searching each e-mail in chronological order  
4 of said set of topically-related e-mail.

1           15.    A data processing system for collating e-mail comprising:

2           (a)    circuitry operable for differencing at least one first e-mail message and  
3           a second e-mail message wherein said at least one first e-mail message is prior to said  
4           second e-mail message, said differencing generating a set of unmatched text and a set  
5           of matched text;

6           (b)    circuitry operable for matching said set of matched text against a  
7           collated message file, said matching step identifying a position in said collated  
8           message file at an end of a portion of said collated message file corresponding to said  
9           set of matched text; and

10          (c)    circuitry operable for inserting said set of unmatched text in said  
11          collated message file at said position.

1           16.    The data processing system of claim 15 wherein said at least one first  
2           e-mail message comprises a plurality of first e-mail messages, the data processing  
3           system further comprising:

4           (d)    circuitry operable for repeating (a) for each e-mail message of said  
5           plurality of first e-mail messages; and

6           (e)    circuitry operable for selecting one of said plurality of e-mail messages  
7           having a largest set of matched text, and wherein, in (b), said largest set of matched  
8           lines is matched against said collated message file.

1           17.    The data processing system of claim 15 further comprising circuitry  
2           operable for selectably adding a user-configurable identifier to said set of unmatched  
3           text inserted in (c).

1           18.    The data processing system of claim 15 wherein said at least one first  
2           e-mail message and said second e-mail message comprise a set of topically-related e-  
3           mail selected in response to a preselected pattern in a header portion of each e-mail of  
4           said set of topically-related e-mail.

1           19.    The data processing system of claim 18 further comprising:

2 (d) circuitry operable for searching each e-mail message of said set of  
3 topically-related e-mail for at least one member of a preselected set of prepended  
4 identifiers;

5 (e) circuitry operable for, if said at least one at least one member of a  
6 preselected set of prepended identifiers matches a portion of said message of said set  
7 of topically-related messages:

8 (i) selecting a portion of said message not having said prepended  
9 identifier;

10 (ii) inserting said portion from (i) into said collated message file at  
11 a position following a portion matching a set of text having said at least one member  
12 of a preselected set of prepended identifiers; and

13 (iii) bypassing (a)-(c).

1 20. The data processing system of claim 19 further comprising:

2 (f) circuitry operable for extracting said set of text having said at least one  
3 member of a preselected set of prepended identifiers;

4 (g) circuitry operable for stripping said at least one member of a  
5 preselected set of prepended identifiers from said set of text; and

6 (h) circuitry operable for matching a set of text from (g) against said  
7 collated message file, wherein said position in (e)(ii) comprises a position at an end of  
8 a portion of said collated message file matching a set of text from (g).